

November 30, 2018

Dear Parents,

Our teachers engage their students in lessons about physical and emotional health and wellness through our SEL Program (**RULER**) and our Health Program (**The Great Body Shop**). Mrs. Fuller, our school social worker, does lessons in each classroom twice a month in support of what the children are learning from their classroom teacher, as well as our school psychologist, Mrs. Schmid. Over the next couple of weeks, the children will be learning about personal space and safety, privacy, and respecting the human body.

In our work with children, we use an image to help them understand the concept of personal space. You may have heard your child refer to personal space as a “bubble” or heard him/her say (if someone hit or poked him/her), “*S/he popped my bubble!*” Using that language, we are helping children understand that a person has a right to feel his/her personal space is protected and his/her body is respected. If someone invades that space or hurts them in any way, our students are learning to give “I messages” in a strong voice: “*I don't like when you push me. Please stop.*”

In our lessons on personal safety, we teach the children the phrase, “*My body belongs to me.*” We explain that everyone’s body is special. The children are learning that the human body has many amazing parts that do important jobs. We teach children that certain parts of their bodies are *theirs alone*—that means they are *private*. We define private parts of the body as being the areas that are covered by a bathing suit. We continue to emphasize to the children that they have the right to personal space and to feel their body is safe and respected. Next, we introduce the concept of different kinds of touches - *safe, unsafe* and *confusing* touches. **Safe touches** are those that feel good on the outside and inside. Safe touches include hugs, pats on the back, and an arm around the shoulder. We do tell the children that there is a kind of safe touch that may not *always* feel good on the outside, but is good for them because it keeps them clean and healthy. Parents and doctors help keep children clean and healthy with safe touches when they wash their hair, remove a splinter, or give a shot. **Unsafe touches** are those that are hurtful on the inside and outside. They hurt a person’s body and feelings. *A push makes me feel hurt and scared.* Unsafe touches include hitting, pushing, pinching, and kicking. **Confusing touches** are those that may feel good on the outside but not on the inside. A confusing touch may make a person feel uncomfortable. We teach our students to be assertive when someone does something that is unsafe, confusing, or makes them feel uncomfortable. They practice using a *strong body, strong voice, and strong words* to tell a person to **stop**. Finally, the children are learning the phrase, “*No, go, tell*” to remember what to do if someone touches or wants to touch or look at their private body parts. We want children to feel comfortable setting personal boundaries and to know that they can talk to trusted adults if they ever feel unsafe or uncomfortable.

Our most important message to children is they have a right to feel safe, respected, and in control of their own bodies. We hope that by sharing the content of our lessons with you, you feel even more comfortable talking with your children about what they are learning.

As always, please do not hesitate to call if you have any questions.

Warm regards,
Lynn Herschlein